

# LIMERICK SOCIALIST

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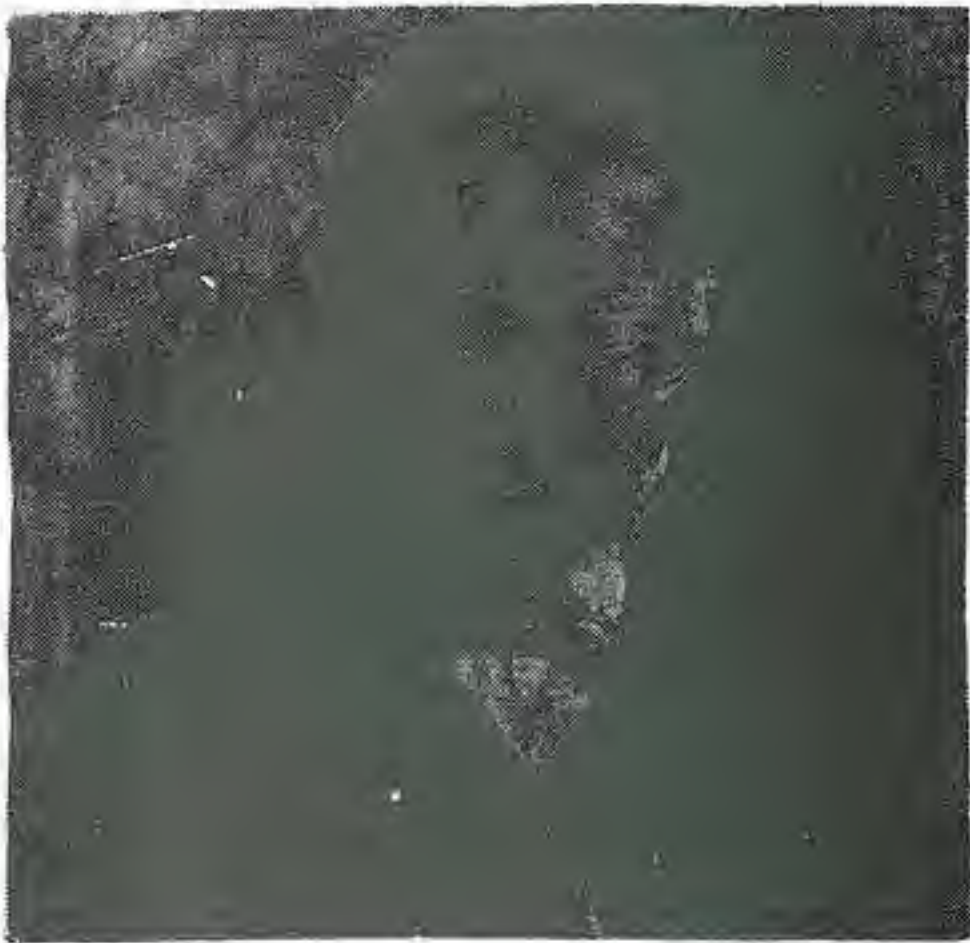
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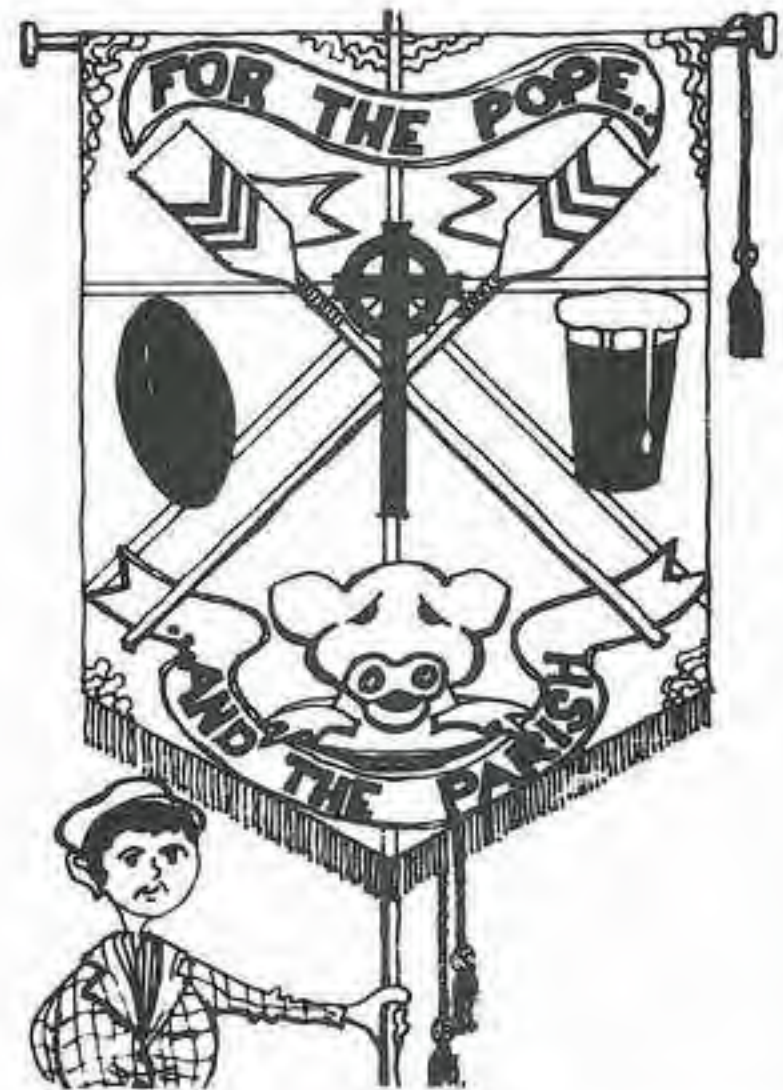
THE  
VOICE  
OF THE  
WORKER

'That which is good for the working class I esteem patriotic ...' *James Connolly*

## THE BARD OF THOMOND



## 'THE PARISH PUMP'



## Family Planning



Mrs. Bridget Hogan O'Higgins F. G.

## Lament for Dr. Newman



# LAMENT FOR DR. NEWMAN

by DERMOT McEVOY

NOW THAT Lent is over and we've had an opportunity of seeing the extent to which the rich people of Limerick followed the New Testament recommendation, quoted by Dr. Jeremiah Newman in his first Lenten Pastoral, to sell what they have and give to the poor, it is time to take another look at the Pastoral. It contained, as an MP once said in another connection, many things that were true and many things that were new, adding "unfortunately that which was true was not new and that which was new was not true". Dr. Newman, as Edmund Burke put it, has practised the truth with economy "so that he may practise it the longer". His Pastoral is a defence of the established order of things: he refers to Our Lord's follower "the wealthy Joseph of Arimathea", suggesting thereby that it is all right to be rich. Nonsense. If Joseph did not sell what he had and give to the poor, he could not have been a true follower of Jesus. Or does Dr. Newman suggest that Joseph of Arimathea was disobedient, and a liar to boot?

Despite this self-disqualification, Dr. Newman continues, in his version of Christian history, to denounce "an extreme position in which poverty is cultivated by way of an exaggerated anti-worldly attitude". I don't know who he's hitting at there because outside some rare groups only the odd eccentric cultivates poverty; most people have it thrust on them from the cradle to the grave. His Lordship suggests a compromise solution. But how can there be a compromise with, say, inherited wealth? Even in this narrow sense how can it be just that one lot of children without any merit of brain or skill of hand should fall into easy money and material comfort while another lot, who may very well — and often are — more meritorious should start life with the dreadful handicap of poverty? I cannot see it. Simply put, if one man is rich, not a few people are condemned to poverty.

What socialism is about is to change that order of things. We socialists don't want alms, we want our natural rights. Rights we should get democratically, but if we are denied these rights by any twisting of the democratic process, then — and not till then — are we entitled to seize our rights. Here, I take issue with Dr. Newman when he is inclined to denigrate "the early Socialist, Proudhon, who declared that 'All property is theft'." (I think Dr. Newman must at least be apprised of the existence of the *Limerick Socialist* because he is the first Irish bishop to mention Pierre-Joseph Proudhon, a reference to whom graced our pages recently). So for the record, let us quote from Proudhon's *Qu'est-ce que la Propriete?* (What is Property?):

"If I were asked to answer the following question: 'What is slavery?' and I should answer in one word, 'Murder!', my meaning would be understood at once. No further argument would be required to show that the power to take from a man his thought, his will, his personality, is a power of life and death, and that to enslave a man is to kill him. Why, then, to this other question: 'What is property?' may I not likewise answer, 'Theft'?"

I am sure Dr. Newman knows that long before Proudhon, Jean-Jacques Rousseau in his *Contrat Social* described how all this property lark began: "A man put a few staves round a piece of land, said 'This is mine' and found people foolish enough to believe him". Let's not continue this foolishness.

I am always reminded of Proudhon because I've just learned that the comtoise clock I treasure comes from the village in the Jura mountains where Proudhon was born. With each swing of the brass lyre-shaped pendulum I am reminded as it ticks my life away, that Proudhon's boast was "When it comes to Socialism, I am Jurassic limestone". Jurassic limestone is of the same nature as The Burren in County Clare and I am proud to think that, vicariously, I am as lasting in my Socialism as Pierre-Joseph.

Referring to the outstanding social work of the Church Dr. Newman names the quiet and uncontentious work of the Society of St. Vincent de Paul. A pity that His Lordship does

not have a word from time to time with his neighbour, Bishop Casey of Kerry, and he would have found that a firm of high-interest moneylenders operating out of Limerick is causing grave concern to the St. Vincent de Paul Society in Tralee. The *Kerryman* reports:

'In one street alone in the town, ten women are involved in loans ranging up to £200 and of these, eight loans were contracted without the knowledge of their husbands. The company is known to operate in almost all quarters of the town ... and there is little trouble securing loans. The difficulty lies in the fact that this company, and others like it, work among the poor or near-poor', said the Society's spokesman. These people are living in a kind of poverty from which there is little chance of escape'.

Dr. Newman knows that Christ whipped the moneylenders out of the Temple. What's he doing about those who are defiling his diocese and making a nonsense of the work of the Society of St. Vincent de Paul? Have they stopped operating since his Lenten appeal to the conscience of the rich?

While we're still dealing with the rich, what sort of conscience has, say, Mr. Hoppe, former managing director of Harland and Wolff, of Belfast, whose £70,000 salary was paid into a Swiss bank so that it would be free of tax? Or, say, the lately dead Aristotle Socrates Onassis, who married the widow of the (Irish) Saint John F. Kennedy? One obituary says: "To his women he was extremely generous. He once gave Maria Callas a whole oil tanker, a penance perhaps for his habit of falling asleep while she was singing. To Jackie he gave more than her own weight in jewels. In the first year of their marriage (approved by that Boston Cardinal) they spent £8 million; £21,900 a day". The conscience of the rich! Dr. Newman has been too long in the cloisters of Maynooth; he suffers, bless him!, from the common delusion that a close scrutiny of the past can yield a useful insight into the pressing problems of the present. George Bernard Shaw in *Heartbreak House* aptly points up the natural fecklessness of the rich, the 'nice' people who come to the top:

'The captain is in his bunk, drinking bottled ditch-water; and the crew is gambling in the fore-castle. She will strike and sink and split. Do you think the laws of God will be suspended in favour of England because you were born in it?' For England, My Lord, substitute, Ireland.

And a final word about religion. Soon, the 'I believe' of the Nicene Creed is to be changed into 'We believe', of which my former colleague, Auberon Waugh, son of Evelyn, reminds me: 'How can I possibly know whether the person three rows away from me in church accepts the full implications of the Trinity or has even attempted to chart in his mind's eye the procession of the Holy Ghost?' Indeed, how can I tell whether the man three pews in front of me at St. Alphonsus's believes in *anything* except the resurrection of the Taca — and the 40p rabbit?

A kindly Abbe said to me, long ago and far away, in the Cathedral of St. Meurice in Lille: *Vous etes un ame tres dispute*. So the argument continues, the dialectic sharpens but only when Dr. Newman strays from theology into sociology. When it comes to socialism, His Lordship, I say with respect, needs a coadjutor and I have the temerity to think that I'm his man.

I lament for Dr. Newman for his failure to denounce murder, materialism, his letting-off of the rich, I am sure that he hates these so-called banquets, the may-it-please-your-Lordship addresses, that he'd prefer to be at home with his breviary, his cat and a red-herring, or at least, a herring. That's why I lament for — and with — Jeremiah.

It may be unseemly, but let me add that in a recent competition for graffiti, I failed to enter what I saw in a London pub: 'Please do not adjust your mind, there may be a fault in reality'. I think it beats 'Oedipus, phone your mum!' Do you?

# THE BARD OF THOMOND

A LITERARY ASSESSMENT  
By P. LYSAGHT

Limerick people have taken Michael Hogan, the Bard of Thomond to their hearts. He will certainly not be forgotten within the foreseeable future. Since his death in 1899 his "Drunken Thady" has been read and enjoyed, indeed even recited — all 380 lines — in his native city and further afield. Personally, I heard it recited, word perfect, about two years ago in a pub near Lough Gur. The outlines of his turbulent life are, I believe, equally well known; while every decade or so, a new edition of some of his poems, or a series of articles on his life and work appear. Of his popularity there can be no question; it began when he was a young man writing for "The Munster News", and it is still with us seventy years after his death.

But while eulogies there are in plenty, one will search in vain for any critical assessment of the Bard's work. Until recently, at any rate, it was apparently as anathema to be critical of him, as it would be foolhardy to criticise him, and thus incur his wrath, while he was alive.

However, now that the dust of decades has settled on the majority of the poems he wrote — only a few are remembered today — some attempt at an evaluation of his work will cause a ripple or two at most compared to the storm it would certainly have produced some years ago.

Michael Hogan, who was born in 1832, began writing at an early age. We can, however, assume that the best of his work was written in post-famine Ireland, and at the time when the Young Irelanders' paper *The Nation*, was read throughout the land by rich and poor. From a cursory examination of most of his ballads, it is quite obvious that Hogan was greatly influenced by the poets of *The Nation*. The similarities in many instances are so obvious that one would be tempted to accuse him of plagiarism if he were not so much of an individualist at heart. In fact, he published some poems anonymously in *The Nation*. But the influence of the paper on the Bard was a mixed blessing. The patriotism, the pride in our past which *The Nation* proclaimed was a new concept to Hogan, something which he tried to imitate even if he did not quite understand. He was more in the Gaelic tradition; his loyalty was to his native Thomondgate, as distinct from Ireland at large. Thus many of what we can call his national ballads lack this "gradh" for Ireland and her heroic past which we find in *The Nation's* poems. They are distinguished more for hatred of the Saxon foe and the resulting poverty than for any positive love of one's country.

If we take, almost at random, any of his poems it will, I believe, show the Bard's faults as well as his undoubted powers. Take, for example, "The Fairy Bride", subtitled a Legend of Killeely. It is a wonderful tale. Briefly, it tells how Cathol MacCurtain, the bard of Donough O'Brien of Thomond, rescues his young Eileen from the fairies who had taken her to their palace in the sky. Grand stuff — but somehow we are not quite convinced. It is a bit too theatrical, too much like a film scenario. Unnecessary details, which retard rather than assist the free flow of the tale, are introduced. This is one of the Bard's worse faults. Most of his ballads are far too long: they could do with merciless pruning. Try reading one and you will find that the monotony of his heroic couplets and alexandrines is wearying. Apparently he also believed that piling adjective upon adjective was the only way to create atmosphere, whereas one judicious word could be more effective. He essayed too much. He lumbered his tales with too much detail, and very often we cannot see the wood for the trees. In short, Hogan was, as Disraeli said of Gladstone, "Animated by the exuberance of his own verbosity". In "The

Since the recent publication of the book "The Bard of Thomond" by Frank Hamilton, a new interest has developed in the worker-poet, Michael Hogan. The article published below is, as far as we are aware, only the second attempt to seriously examine Hogan's work from a literary viewpoint.

Fairy Bride" too another glaring fault of his is evident. He was guilty of some atrocious rhymes, and one can come across the occasional word of his in his effort at rhyming which is not to be found in any dictionary.

But what of the other side of the coin? Again take this line from "The Fairy Bride". "The light of the moon seems to freeze in each fold". This beautiful simile would, I feel, if penned by a Tennyson or a Pope, be now found in many a Dictionary of Quotations. And the more one reads the Bard the more one comes across such felicitous lines, lines which one can repeat over and over again with pleasure.

But it is when the Bard forgets the remote past and Ireland's wrongs that he really delights us. His "Drunken Thady", that long semi-ribald poem, is a classic of its kind, memorable, well told, and with many passages of sustained suspense. The description of Drunken Thady "giddy as a Summer midge, staggering towards Old Thomond Bridge" is perfect. The whole poem conjures up a vision of old Limerick which is, we feel, as accurate and true as Goldsmith's description of the village schoolmaster. On ballads such as this are reputations made.

Apart from Drunken Thady one finds, I believe, the authentic Hogan not in his "Lays and Legends of Thomond", but in those little pamphlets he had published at one shilling each, entitled "The Story of Shawn-a-Scoob". Hogan saw everything in black and white, and the poverty and the political jobbery of the Limerick of his day aroused his fury, and when his "dander was up" he could write almost as venomously as Swift. He essayed as he says himself, "to expose corruption and political jobbery in every sphere", and he promised their friends and admirers "photographs more true to life and nature than those contained in their albums". But what he produced were not photographs but cruel caricatures. His vitriolic pen was adept at sketching the warts and nothing more.

We look back nostalgically to the Bard and his times, and while we must admire his moral courage and sympathise with the hard lot that was habitually his, we should not, I feel, place him on a higher pedestal than he deserves. The word genius should be used sparingly; it should not be mentioned in the same breath as the Bard. Essentially, he was a colourful local character with a fertile imagination and a gift for rhyme, a balladeer of distinction who often smothered his first love in a welter of words. Perhaps he was too ambitious? Perhaps the initial praise he received led him to essay what was beyond his powers? It would also appear that the Bard often wrote in the heat of the moment, and often tossed off several verses of a whole ballad at a sitting. But I doubt if he could sit down and change a line once he had it written. He was a manufacturer rather than a craftsman. He had not the temperament to chisel in the finer lines or to hack off the warts that are all too evident.

"Inflame", he writes "my soul, O Muse, with fierce desire, To draw the picture, with a touch of fire". Yes, the Muse often inflamed him with a touch of fire, but Michael Hogan seems to have assumed that the Muse was always by his side. She was not. She often deserted him, rather alarmed, I would suggest, by his intoxication with words, or annoyed by his tendency to go off at a tangent rather than keep to the essentials of his story.

If, in his young days, he had been warned against the common mistake of saying too much, if he had been schooled to omit irrelevant and unnecessary details, if he had learned to altar the rhythm of his ballads, he would, I feel sure, have developed into a better poet; for, as I have tried to point out, the stuff of which poets are made was in his make-up. On the other hand, if he had developed along these lines, he may never have written Drunken Thady, and Thomondgate, and indeed Limerick, would have been all the poorer had he not done so.

# Conscientious Considerations

(Reprinted from "Church and State").

The hierarchy, these days, is speaking in a new and sweeter tone. A post-Mother-and-Child tone. The sweetness consists of this: they now agree that legislators have the right to make legislation they don't approve of, PROVIDED the legislators have considered episcopal objections to the point where (through fatigue?) they agree with them, by which time of course they don't want to pass the offending legislation anyway.

If you don't know what I'm talking about, go and re-read that November 25th statement on contraception. Meanwhile, I'll reveal what I overheard when Richie Ryan last called on the Cardinal.

"Evening, Richie", said the Cardinal. "What can you do for me?"

"Well — it's about Finance, your Grace — maybe you guessed — I'm under pressure from the Labour Party, and unions, and the lot of them".

"Tell me your problem, then; but, you know, it's up to you to legislate, after a conscientious consideration of all the factors involved".

"Um — aye. Well, they want tax reliefs for P.A.Y.E. men, tax on farmers, capital gains tax, and the nationalisation of everything beginning with A, as a start".

"Bloody Hell! Now, tell me what you said to them, and we'll see if you missed any of the factors involved".

"I said we should guard against extremism, but that their representations would be given my prompt and attentive attentions".

"For a start", said the Cardinal, "one word you could have omitted was prompt. Now, we must realise that taxation is wrong in principle. The Church has always opposed it as such. Nevertheless, governments in practice need taxation to finance themselves, which the Church accepts, which of course does not make taxation the less wrong in principle. A man has a right not to have the fruits of his labour consumed by the omnivorous state".

"So I can give tax reliefs, right?" said the trembling Richie.

"That is not at all a necessary concomitant", said the Cardinal sternly. "We must have enough philosophy to be able to make distinctions. The fact that a man is overtaxed, or indeed, is being wronged by being burdened with essential taxation at all, does not necessarily mean that his interest is best served by tax reliefs. That is state intervention again — in reverse, it is true, but a further example of state action where the initiative of the family and the individual is more germane. To illustrate, I will quote you the views of a learned Catholic, printed in the *Irish Times* in May 1953.

*That a Catholic is not required under the moral law to make a complete income-tax return is a commonplace of Catholic teaching. The reason lies in the realistic approach of the Church to all problems. Every Government knows that a considerable number of people who are liable will be able to avoid paying income-tax either in whole or in part, and in consequence the rate is fixed at a higher figure than it would be if everybody paid his or her just share. The man who pays up is entitled in strict justice to take cognisance of this device; he should not be penalised for the evasion practiced by others, and he is morally entitled to hold back part of his income in fairness to himself. What part is a matter that will vary with individual cases, and it is here that the confessor must be consulted. People's circumstances differ so widely that no hard and fast rule can be laid down.*

## THE DISTASTEFUL ALTERNATIVE

"But, your Grace, — how could a Finance Minister operate

if everyone did that?"

"The point, you dimwit", said the Cardinal, "is that everyone does, and if anyone doesn't he hasn't much sense. That crowd who are crying for tax reliefs have a simple option: withhold more of their income. And if they can't do that under P.A.Y.E., then why aren't they asking for a system whereunder they might? And now, to give you a further reason you'll understand — if you give tax reliefs will you not have to find extra revenue?"

"Yes, your Grace".

"And where could you find it from?"

Richie had his hands on his chin as if he was thinking.

"I'll tell you where you could find it from. A tax on farms and a capital gains tax, correct?"

No answer.

"I thought so. Now, as regards those two things, a number of factors need conscientious consideration. Are you listening? Conscientious, I said! The first factor, between you and me, is that if you do either, and particularly the second, I'll brand you as a godless anti-clerical and make a poor man's Noel Browne of you. Don't sniff. Now, the farming population, as Bishop Lucey will tell you more eloquently than I, has long been the backbone of the Irish Church, and hence of the Irish nation. They are famous for their generosity in the support of their pastors. They keep their Church collection boxes full. Now if the State demands that they pay it money, they will have to stop paying money which they are already paying. And what money do you think that will be?"

No answer.

"I thought you'd understand. Next question. A man who owns property has the right to sell it to the highest bidder. No dilution of that principle may be tolerated. Then why should a man be financially penalised for doing what is his right? Is the offer which a buyer makes not made voluntarily, no matter how high it is? And is not any taxation of the seller, on the grounds that he has earned an unusually high income, a criminal penalty on productive initiative, and an envious persecution of an honest trade?"

"But you don't understand, my Lord", Richie piped up, with some courage, I thought, "people say that property sp---businessmen are not actually productive--"

"When I don't understand something, I'll tell you, you don't tell me", said the unbending Cardinal. "And we must not worry too much about what people say, because we teach them, they don't teach us. Now, if you had even come here with a plan devised to get Pat Quinn's pubs without getting at our land, I might have considered it. But you come here repeating this nonsense about the property business not being productive. The Church, I will have you know, regularly buys land, and quickly resells it at a far higher price, the credit being due to our superior knowledge of the market. The money thus earned goes to building our Churches and buying our Mercedes, and so on. Now are you shameless enough to tell me you don't consider that productive?"

No answer.

"Well", said the Cardinal, rising, "an unbiased observer must conclude that the case for tax reliefs or new taxes is pretty flimsy, at this point in time. However, there's one thing you could do: if you thought you should, you could remove the liability of interest repayments on loans for tax relief, after, say, the first couple of thousands. Your namesake the Archbishop has got himself millions in debt, and he's still opening parishes and building Churches as if 'twas the last lap to Judgement — That kind of Francis Xavier can get you overcapitalised, you know, and I think we should watch his liquidity".

# EDUCATION

## A REPLY TO DR. NEWMAN

by JOE LITTLE

Manipulation of students, in such institutions as Plassey, Dr. Newman observes, is made easier for outside agencies because the technologist is indispensable no matter how society is organised; to be precise, he uses the word "vulnerable" to describe the technological colleges in this context. But whereas Dr. Newman gives an adequate reason for anybody to desire to use these colleges as objects of their respective forms of manipulation, he fails to declare the true cause of the successes of radical and revolutionary movements in such institutions throughout the world. There may be other contributory factors, but certainly in Britain, the one I offer is now seen to be correct.

As an economy becomes more modernised through the applications of advanced technology, the elite sees its own downfall in view unless it absorbs into itself a sufficient number of highly qualified and thoroughly conditioned technologists. This is seen not only by governments and local authorities, but also by the economic elite. The owners of capital need a skilled and obedient managerial class. Owners and controllers of capital are generally the same people until such technology as we see in Ireland today begins to modernise the economy. Technological skills must be distributed more extensively throughout the community if the workforce is to be there to man more profitable industries. This the older elite sees very clearly; it begins to socialise the newly-needed task force by absorbing it through the medium of third-level technological education. There is, however, a clash between these two aims, skill-distribution and elite-absorption.

Because the middle class forns upon experimentation in such a vital field as education, and because it prefers to hold unto the older, proven and established educational institutions, the elite is forced to draw on working-class material for its new technological colleges. This decision, facilitated in Britain by the introduction of a substantial comprehensive grant scheme, introduced to the technological colleges a significantly greater proportion of students with working-class backgrounds than had ever been in the older universities. A cultural clash between the students and the authorities is evident in most British polytechnics and newer universities: the students have become acutely aware of the manipulative element in their education. Since they have no say in the running of their institutions they turn to the only form of rebellion which their masters have revealed to them. To stand at Speakers' Corner in Hyde Park and to listen to the cliché-ridden expressions of frustration being issued from under a leftist or a fascist flag is most instructive: our forms of rebellion are made fashionable, as Dr. Newman quite rightly states.

The question which I would like to pose is: who makes them fashionable and why? Industry pounces immediately on revolutionary art and thought, just as it pounced on the respective images of the hippies and Che Guevara, not only to make money, but to dissolve a threat. It treats such movements as spectacles within the system instead of subversions thereof.

Since socialism has been made intellectually respectable, those who desire a democratic restructuring of society must come out of their intellectual cocoons and join the conditioned population in their struggle for awareness. In the case of students this means rejecting the social classification of 'student' by refusing to be physically isolated on the campuses, by working with the people and by talking and

### PART THREE

thinking WITH the people and not AT them. Dialogue is the only road to consciousness, and consciousness of the oppressive nature of our society is the only key to popular, democratic change; change which does not herald more oppression in the new post-revolutionary society; change which marks a great step on the road to human liberation.

Students must join the people, not through the present party-political affiliations. Students have the rare opportunity to think, because they have the time to do so; thought without experience and action is a sterile pursuit. When Dr. Newman states that students "... simply cannot, have amassed the knowledge and experience which only greater maturity will bring" he is giving the classic excuse for inaction. To that I would answer with the parody: "You have not been long enough under anaesthetic to conform sufficiently well to earn the prize of being isolated from the human reality".

To be an island of farcical mediocrity in a sea of oppression is certainly one's fate if one succumbs to official normality.

Meanwhile, students and teachers must strive to attain a democratic, searching and exciting education instead of the autocratic, limited and dull indoctrination of 'certainty' to which we have all been subjected.

Schools of all descriptions must become truly democratic communities within their own greater communities which, through dialogical interaction, will themselves strive for true democracy.

(Concluded).

## FAMOUS LAST WORDS

"We paid dearly for neglecting St. Mary's Park over the years and it cannot be allowed to happen again in any housing scheme", the City Manager, Mr. M. Macken, said at a meeting of the City Council when replying to questions regarding the maintenance of houses estimated to cost £19,900. He said there was a general obligation on them to keep the houses in good repairs.

("Down Memory Lane - 20 years Ago" - "Limerick Chronicle", 15/3/75).

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### THE INDUSTRIES AND WORKERS

There were many watermills in and near the city. With the introduction of steam power these mills did not become obsolete but continued in use up to 1920. A notable watermill in its day was one on the Maunsell estate at Mungret which produced blankets and serges. The Yorkshire family of Maunsell followed Cromwell into Ireland and settled at Tervoe. Members of the family entered parliament, the first Baron Maunsell, Lord Emly, became Postmaster General around 1862. Through the efforts of a French Jesuit refugee from the Paris Commune, Emly was converted to the Roman Catholic belief. This change of belief marked the decline of the family fortunes. Through Emly's influence, the Jesuits acquired the Model Farm at Mungret and founded Mungret College in 1882.

Emly's property was mortgaged and sold. His mansion was gutted by scrap metal dealers. The woods he loved were cut down and the estate again became a wilderness. The vacant windows of Tervoe House look out on two hundred tons of cow dung piled high to mature on the front lawn of the mansion where formerly a pair of mastiffs, linked by a six foot chain, mowed down and savaged any Irish who dared to walk on the sacred ground. The pillared portico from Tervoe House now adorns the front entrance of the Jesuit College at Mungret and gives the place an air of modest affluence.

With the introduction of steam powered mills, Limerick became the centre of the flour milling industry in the south of Ireland. Working conditions in those mills were near akin to slavery. The workers worked twelve hours each day for six days each week. Food was brought to them by their relatives. The workers had to eat while working; they were not permitted to rest. Domesticated animals are allowed to rest while eating; the workers were denied this privilege. Writing in *The Shamrock*, Michael Hogan, the Bard of Thomond has this to say: *I worked for three years in one of those mills; it was like three years penal servitude.*

In order to keep those mills in continuous operation, many six-storied grain stores were built in various parts of the city. In these stores the provincial harvest of grain and imported wheat was stored. As the grain had to be continuously turned, working conditions in dust and near darkness were appalling. The men kept the same working hours and working conditions as the mills. In 1913 there were five flour mills in the city. The employees earned their living and raised large families on the rotting of their lungs and premature deaths. They thanked the Lord for the constant jobs. They praised their virtuous God-fearing employers, who had ample reason for their fear of the Diety.

Cleeve's Condensed Milk Factory on the north bank of the Shannon was the largest milk-processing factory in the country. They operated a box factory and cooperage to export their products. The employees had decent wages and hygienic working conditions. This was due to the foresight of the Cleeve family who knew that due to the perishable nature of the milk entering their factory a strike could ruin them in a short time. Cleeve's also operated a toffee factory at Charlotte Quay. The total in the two factories was almost 1000 contented employees. Cleeve's had a good export trade. The products of these two factories helped to load many a boat which otherwise would have left port in ballast. The decline of the factory was due to the burning of many of their creameries by British Forces in 1920, The locomotive repair yards of the Great Southern and Western Railway at Roxboro gave satisfactory employment to over 600 men. This repair depot

# The Fourth Siege of Limerick

and the two Iron Foundries in the city gave some scope to many a budding genius with mechanical aptitude.

All of the foregoing were the big industries of the city. They were productive enterprises and not parasite sales organisations. A smaller and homely industry was the manufacture of clay pipes for the tobacco smoker. Merrit's Factory in Broad Street in the Irish Town employed over 20 of their relations making clay pipes. They made a standard plain pipe selling at 1d, and several other ornamental types for ceremonial occasions such as the wakening of the dead before a funeral. Pipes of special design were made for newly built houses and were embedded in the walls when the house was being built. Due to the fragile nature of the pipes there was constant employment in their manufacture. The family imported two cargoes of 50 tons of pipe clay every year from Liverpool. The mineral water industry in Limerick was carried on by several families in the Sexton Street area. They obtained the natural mineral spring water from wells sunk over fifty feet deep.

The secret of success of the Limerick bacon factories and their world wide reputation for quality lay in the mineral springs from which they obtained their supplies of bacteria-free water. There was some preservative quality in the water which gave the bacon good keeping qualities and made it tender, succulent and world famous.

The quality of these mineral springs was well known in the city. In the newer part of the city, Newtown Pery, many of the houses had wooden pumps in their basements some of which were in use until recently.

During excavations at Watergate, within the boundary of the city walls, a twelve-foot wooden pipe or conduit was found ten feet below the surface and nearby also at ten feet was found a large stone wheel with toothed edge which was part of an apparatus for drawing up barrels of water from a deep well within the walled city. As the Shannon and Abbey rivers are tidal, with tides of over fourteen feet, it is obvious that a dependable water supply within the bounds of the city wall was vital to the defence of the city.

Cannon balls and other weapons found on the site would indicate that the well was in use around the time of the third siege of Limerick in 1691. In time the well would have become polluted by seepage from the St. Michael's graveyard less than one hundred feet distant. The well would then have been filled in and abandoned.

It is clear then that a dependable water supply within the city walls, under the control of the garrison was vital to the defence of Limerick city.

(To be continued).

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HELD OVER

We regret that owing to pressure of space the concluding part of "The Limerick Press and Chicago" is held over until next month.

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# FAMILY PLANNING — The Hogan O'Higgins way

Mrs. Bridget Hogan O'Higgins, the Fine Gael Deputy, is one of the four women members of Dail Eireann. She is the mother of eight children, ranging in ages from two to fifteen years. Now aged 42 years, she went forward for election for the first time in 1957. (The fact that her father was Patrick Hogan, the former Minister for Agriculture, was a relevant factor in this decision). She also has the distinction of being married to Michael O'Higgins, the Leader of the Fine Gael party in the Senate.

Speaking during the Dail debate on the Social Welfare Bill on March 12th, Mrs. Hogan O'Higgins gave an indication of some of her thinking on this subject when she stated that "this country had moved into an area where in certain cases it was more profitable not to work than to work". She further claimed that "there was no real poverty in the country now. There were isolated cases, many of them, but that was not the fault of the Government. In some cases, social welfare benefits were misused or not applied for".

It is certain that Mrs. Hogan O'Higgins will not be forced to seek social welfare benefits to survive, now or in the near future. In an article by Geraldine Kennedy in the January edition of the Catholic magazine, "The Word", some interesting facts about this deputy emerged:

*Mrs. Hogan O'Higgins, who was educated at the Dominican Convent in Wicklow, is now the largest farmer in the Dail with an acreage of 379 acres. She and her political husband ... own two six-bedroomed Georgian houses in Dublin and Galway. Her hobbies are riding, swimming and handwork.*

Mrs. Hogan O'Higgins was conveniently absent from the Dail on July 16th last year when the vote on the Government's Contraceptives Bill was taken. (Her husband has been an implacable opponent of contraception and has repeatedly obstructed any moves toward family planning legislation in the Senate).

But though Mrs. Hogan O'Higgins is impressively prolific in the bed and has eight children to show for her activity in this area, her track record in the Dail is somewhat less productive.

Commenting on her work as a deputy "The Word" stated.

“ Mrs. Bridgid Hogan-O'Higgins, T.D. (F.G. Clare-South Galway) represents a mainly rural population of 34,820, where the main concerns are agriculture, education, social welfare and health. During the ten-month period to January, 1974, her main contribution in the Dail was a speech on the Education Estimates 1973-'74 and she tabled three "drainage and sewerage" questions. Her contribution to the Agricultural Estimates 1973-'74 was: "Would the deputy (Mr. John Esmonde, F. G. Wexford) really know the difference?" (between the fresh and the frozen bird). ”

In a parting shot in The Word interview this woman deputy speaking on the lack of equality for women's participation in the Dail and in the world generally, said: "The Lord made us fifty-fifty, to be represented fifty-fifty".

Naturally enough, Mrs. Hogan O'Higgins said nothing about the need for the equality of wealth in the world. But why would she? With her husband's wages as Leader of the Senate, her own Dail salary, the income from her farm and value of her two Georgian houses, this kind of equality holds little attraction for her or her husband.

With two houses and twelve bedrooms to accommodate her family she has few worries about pressure of space. In this situation, the problem of family planning takes on a less urgent note than in those families fortunate enough to have a house with two or three bedrooms. The attitude of Mrs. Hogan O'Higgins and her husband to contraception is more easily understood when set against this background of wealth and property.

## SEGREGATION IRISH STYLE

*Unmarried men and women attending Clones cinema were obliged to sit on different sides of the auditorium. ("Down Memory Lane — 30 Years Ago" — "Limerick Chronicle", 22/3/75).*

## Many are called . . . .

*Mr. Dick Grainger, mechanical engineer, (C.I.E.) told me of the difficulty of choosing 100 apprentices annually from 1,000 applicants. They do not always pick the best at examinations, he said, but try to find the boys who will become contented craftsmen. For the particularly gifted apprentice, there are two university scholarships every year. (Candida, "Irish Times", 31/3/75).*

## MR. TAOISEACH'S CONSCIENCE

*Mr. Taoiseach,*

*I read in the papers a few months ago that in the voting on the Contraceptives Bill you were guided by your conscience. I read in the papers a few days ago of a poor man who died of starvation in his house in the Midlands. I read in the papers this morning that you have got a wage increase of £1,192 — the average yearly income of a lot of married men with large families in this country. I am hoping to read in the papers tomorrow, what has happened to your conscience.*

*(Letter in the "Irish Press", 14/3/75).*

### PA'S BALL

*An awakened guest wanted to know,  
Why the noise was so great down below,  
The receptionist told him:  
"It's the Mayor's Ball they're holding",  
He said: "Tell them, for f...s sake, let go!"*

# THE PARISH PUMP

PART FIVE

## JIM "PACKET": THE SINGING TRIPEMAN

Jim "Packet" O'Halloran, one-time proprietor of Treacy's packet and tripe shop died a rich man, leaving about £60,000 in hard cash. Residing among the "quality" on the city's Ennis Road, he lived the life of Riley — in the lap of luxury — most of the days of his life. And why not, while others made the £.S.D. the hard way, "blood, sweat and tears", for him!

O'Halloran spent most of his time far away from the odourous, olfactory perfumes which stunk in the nostrils of those who lived in the River. Lane/Keeper View Terrace/Ahern's Row/Athlunkard Street environs. Even at night, especially during the long, hot summers, while Limerick slept and the "machinery" in the tripe factory was at a standstill, the stench from the bellies of cattle and sheep, strewn all over the uncovered, rat-infested yard, polluted not alone the atmosphere but the very bedrooms and kitchens and sent some workers scurrying from the breakfast table ... unable to "stomach" the food placed before them.

Today, under the ownership of the Mullane family, Treacy's still does a busy trade, after the refurbishing of the premises by the new proprietors. But Joe Mullane will never make enough money to emulate his predecessor by donating a set of Stations of the Cross to St. Mary's Catholic Church or anywhere else. (The thought that the money spent on O'Halloran's extravagant gesture, and made from the long hours of dirty work of his workers, could have been better spent in improving the wages and working conditions of these women, apparently never crossed his mind).

Joe Mullane and other members of his family now do most of the rough work of preparing the packet and tripe. When an old age pensioner comes looking for 25p worth, Mullane expertly throws a lump from a distance of about six feet on to the weighing-scale. If the piece is overweight he turns a well practised blind eye to it.

"Jim Packet", the name by which O'Halloran was known to the children of the area, was, during World War 1, the country's only official offals contractor to Her Majesty's Government in Britain. (According to a well-known "Parish" wag, that was how he first made his "packet"!). Every Monday morning at 10 o'clock, a horse float, bearing anything from 12 to 15 20-gallon tankards, chock full with tripe, packet, reeds and trotters, would leave for the G.S. & W.R. Station, Limerick, en route to "Blighty". In return, a fat cheque in a long, narrow manilla envelope bearing the letters O.H.M.S., would arrive at the end of each month, at an accommodation address at 20 Athlunkard Street (Murnane's), to be collected later by O'Halloran.

The labour force employed in the "factory" consisted of eight or nine women and a man, styled "collector and deliverer". The women used canvas sacks as aprons and wore hobbled-nailed boots, in the course of their all the year round work of preparing the packet, tripe and trotters. They were paid a miserable pittance ... take it or leave it.

The man (collector) did the rounds of every slaughter-house in the city where he collected bellies, guts and blood. On one occasion, when passing William Street Royal Irish Constabulary Barracks, and having a few half-ones in him (the "gift" of some butcher), he started to wallop the float's mudguard with an ash plant, shouting at the same time, "Out for blood, out for blood!". Immediately, two Black and Tans rushed out and, with riflebutts, began to badly beat the unfortunate man. However, an R.I.C. sergeant, the notorious, ebullient Horan, on coming on the scene, intervened to save the collector from further damage.

O'Halloran liked all and sundry to believe that he was a great lover of music — and so he was. He'd boast to one of his friends, especially when the shop was full: "My association with St. Mary's Choir goes back to the time of Father Dan

"Fitz" and my old friend, Mary Casey, organist". He was certainly the proud possessor of a rich baritone voice, which was put to best effect when, in High C, he'd be heard at the Island Corner, shouting: "Hannah 'Mack', 'tis 4 o'clock on this fine sunny Saturday afternoon, and there isn't a belly in the house scraped yet!"

"Jim Packet" loved opera, especially the lighter and comic kind and was known to visit Dublin annually to enjoy the full season of Gilbert and Sullivan, presented by the D'Oyly Carte Company. At home he seldom missed a performance, whether at the Theatre Royal or Coliseum. His favourite singers were Frank Land, Joseph O'Mara and Eric James. Oftentimes, during "working hours", he would be heard singing excerpts from *The Lily of Killarney*, *Faust*, *La Tosca* and *Rigoletto*, from which latter he would recite the Jester's piece: "He laid a father's curse on me".

Jim O'Halloran has long passed on; so too, with one exception have all those of half-a-century or more ago who slaved to make his fortune in those "good" old days. One sole survivor lives out the last stage of her long life in the relative comfort of the Limerick Corporation scheme of houses for old people at Vizes Field. Her packet and tripe story is unlikely to be featured on *This Is Your Life* but it is certain to be an interesting one ... if ever made available.

Like the pig-buying fraternity, many humorous stories are told about packet and tripe lovers. When it became possible for Limerick people to travel to America on holiday it was a *sine quo non* for many to bring some packet and tripe over with them to their exiled friends. One tale relates how a "Parish" painter bought a plane ticket for a holiday in New York and arranged to bring a trunk full of packet and tripe, backbones and trotters with him. When he arrived at Shannon Airport, it was found that he had neglected to secure a passport and visa. However, by this stage, the trunk was on board the plane, on which it was duly carried to America — without its owner. The surprise — and smell — that hit the customs officers at Kennedy Airport when they opened the trunk a few days later is best left to the imagination. When the dejected painter made his sheepish return to Limerick without his trunk, his enraged wife not only berated him but also battered him around the head with her handbag for his pains!

Another story tells how a group of students purchased some old-fashioned china chamber pots and filled them with cider. They went to Treacy's and bought some packet and tripe and dropped it into the chamber pots. They then hired a sidecar (jarveycar) and set off at a gallop around the city. As they reached the centre of Limerick, the students acted in unison by placing the chamber pots to their heads and drinking deeply. To the further horror of bemused onlookers they dipped into the pots and pulled out the long, brown-coloured lengths of packets which they began to chew contentedly. (This escapade was later unsuccessfully attempted in Kilkee by a well-known Limerick character who was unanimously awarded the Messer of the Year award for his performances over ten successive years at the Clare seaside resort).

A Limerick expression also features the word tripe. "Would a hungry dog eat tripe on a Friday" is often the response of local men to the query, "would you 'fancy' that?" — "that" usually indicating a good-looking girl passing by.

Much of the tripe now eaten in Limerick is brought in from outside areas. The use of this outside bleached tripe has caused local connoisseurs much distress and has led them to definitely conclude that this bleached tripe is "ruining the stomachs of half the people of Limerick".

In our last article on packet and tripe, the word "book", in the phrase, "book, reed and belly", was incorrectly spelt. (The book is part of the sheep's belly and is scored like the leaves of a book, hence its name).

(To be continued).